

Sounds like an old time radio!



Radio is an important part of American History. The world filled homes beginning in the 1920s. Housewives during the day and families at night were transported by adventurous tales, soap operas and comedy, westerns and variety shows, and the news. Radio was so popular that by late 1930s 80% of America owned a radio set.

Beginnings

- ⦿ In 1887, Heinrich Hertz successfully sent and detected radio waves. Guglielmo Marconi built on these efforts and created a wireless communication that could send Morse code – dots and dashes each representing a letter – from a transmitter to a receiver.
- ⦿ Reffenden with help of GE corp., built a high speed wave generator that broadcasts. De Forest invented the vacuum tube which made it easier to receive radio signals.

Mass Audience



- ⦿ Frank Conrad, an engineer for Westinghouse, tinkered with radio as a hobby. He built a radio transmitter in his garage and started broadcasting recorded music, weather reports, sports scores, and allowing his sons to play music.
- ⦿ Westinghouse bought and built a radio station for Conrad called KDKA as long as they could advertise for free.
- ⦿ KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania went on air in 1920 and still is on air today.



National Craze

- ⦿ KDKA was a success. RCA, GE, and AT&T among others started radio stations.
- ⦿ Between 1925 and 1930, 17 million radio sets were sold.
- ⦿ Radio sets became user friendly to tune, and started to look like a fashionable piece of furniture.
- ⦿ In 1922, first “commercial” sold to Queensboro Realty Company. 5 radio “talks” were hosted about the perks of living in the country, on land purchased through QRC.



Networks



- ⦿ Networking made economical sense.
- ⦿ Instead of producing their own programs, they could share programming.
- ⦿ National Broadcast Corporation was the first network (NBC) in 1926.
- ⦿ Columbia Broadcasting System went on the air in 1927.
- ⦿ Immediate competitors --- NBC had 111 stations and CBS had 105.

The Depression: 1930-1940

- ⦿ By most standards, the Radio wasn't hit as hard as other industries.
- ⦿ The amount of money spent on radio advertising tripled from 1930-1935.
- ⦿ The formation of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
- ⦿ FCC was responsible for broadcast and wire regulation.

Birth of FM

- ⦿ Edwin Armstrong developed frequency modulated radio or FM radio to David Sarnoff (head of RCA) in mid-1930's.
- ⦿ Sarnoff was more interested in promoting television.
- ⦿ By 1940, Armstrong had developed FM receivers on his own. Sarnoff offered \$1 Million dollars to Armstrong for his patent, but bitter about being blown off before, Armstrong refused.
- ⦿ World War II halted further development of FM radios and stations.

World War II

- ⦿ Newsprint shortage and an excess profit tax that encouraged companies to advertise helped fuel the radio business.
- ⦿ By 1948, it was apparent thought that TV would take over as the mass audience entertainer.
- ⦿ Edward Murrow – prominent news broadcaster who broadcasted the news from London, with updates on the war.
- ⦿ Brought a sense of “closeness” with America to their soldiers.

1960's

- ⦿ Radio had primarily switched their format over to the one we know today.
- ⦿ Top Hit radio programming was very successful.
- ⦿ AM frequency stations continued to do well with talk shows.

What are some words you think
of when I say “radio?”

Defining Features

- ⦿ Music
- ⦿ News
- ⦿ Specific radio shows/hosts/interviews
- ⦿ Portable
- ⦿ Supplemental
- ⦿ Universal
- ⦿ Selective